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For this recital, I will journey through the Romantic era, starting in the early Romantic era with one of the first song cycles ever written and going all the way to the late Romantic era, with music by Edvard Grieg and Amy Beach. The overarching themes of the program are love, regret, pain, and longing.

### **Sélections / Selections**

#### **Franz Schubert (1797-1828)**

The recital will begin with a set of Franz Schubert songs, with poetry by Austrian poet Johann Mayrhofer. The set's first song is fast and energetic, *Der Schiffer* (The Boatman). The song tells the story of a boatman guiding his boat across a river. As he rows, he reflects on life and his struggles. The boatman sings about the land's beauty but also about the dangers of nature and the uncertainty of his future. The piano plays repeating arpeggios that resemble the motion of the boat traveling down the river. The melody in the vocal line is simple but also shows the uncertainty and the unease the boatman is feeling. The second song of the set is the slow and melancholic *Abendstern* (The Evening Star). The song is a reflection of the evening star, how it will guide the narrator and help him through the darkness of life. The melody of the song is quite simple but the harmonies that the piano plays create a sense of mystique and wonder, and there is a certain calmness you feel throughout the song. The last song of the set is *Der zürndenden Diana* (To Diana in her Wrath). The song tells the story of Diana, the Roman goddess of the hunt, who is angry with the narrator since he has dared to enter her secret grove. She sends a storm after him and he pleads for forgiveness. The song is quite dramatic and goes through different phases, the piano imitates her rage with a repeating triplet pattern. Vocally, the song has extended phrases with many leaps and fast turns that show the desperation of the narrator.

### **Hjertets melodier, Op. 5**

#### **Edvard Grieg (1843-1907)**

The next set of the program is *Hjertets melodier* (Melodies of the Heart) written by Edvard Grieg set to text by the Danish author and poet Hans Christian Andersen. Grieg composed these songs in 1894 and dedicated them to his wife, Nina. This short cycle is comprised of four songs that do not follow a particular story but are rather a declaration of love. The first song, *To brune Øjne* (Two Brown Eyes), is a sweet song that describes the beauty the narrator sees when he looks into the eyes of his beloved. The second song, *Du fatter ej Bølgerens evige Gang* (You Grasp not the Waves Eternal Motion), is a fiery song that captures the angst of the poet and how the person he is talking to is not able to understand him. Grieg sets the mood by having the piano play wave-like patterns, while the vocal line is quite dramatic, with leaps, fast lyrics, and sustained

notes. The third song, *Jeg elsker Dig* (I love you), is a love declaration to the narrator's beloved. The melody is simple with many repeated usages of the phrase *Jeg elsker dig*, which culminates into a grand ending. The last song of the cycle, *Min Tanke er et mægtigt Fjeld* (My Thoughts are a Mighty Mountain), is an intense song that follows the narrator's description of how his love for his beloved is as deep as the sea and as high as the mountains. The song is quite straightforward, with the piano driving the song with repeated triplets as the singer glides over the piano with a simple, yet dramatic melody.

### **Sélections / Selections**

### **Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)**

The third set of the program is three songs composed by Gabriel Fauré. *Lydia*, the first song of the set, with poetry from Leconte de Lisle is a calm love song where the narrator expresses his love for Lydia. The melody is gentle and the piano and vocal line are always playing together. The song stays calm and gentle throughout and there are no dramatic declarations of love in the music, the text is what drives the song forward. Fauré plays with the Lydian mode in the song, which sounds almost like a major scale but with a raised fourth. This is a fun quip by Fauré since the song is called Lydia. The second song of the set is *Le Voyageur* (The Traveller), also with poetry by Armand Silvestre, is a song about a traveler who travels the world alone. The music has a march-like quality and the vocal melody is quite heroic. The mood shifts in the third verse of the song to a more dreamlike state, but then quickly returns to the robust march. *Automne* (Autumn), is the third and last song of this set with poetry written by Armand Silvestre. This song describes autumn and how the seasons are changing but it is also a song about time, and how quickly it moves. The song is haunting, with its repetitive and eerie triplet figure in the right hand of the piano part. Against the right hand, the left hand of the piano part plays a syncopated figure that makes the listener feel uneasy. The melody is the vocal line is subtle, but there is a grand climax at the end of the song when the narrator realizes how much time has gone by and how much he has forgotten.

### **An die ferne Geliebte, Op. 98**

### **Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1927)**

The centerpiece of the recital is the song cycle *An die ferne Geliebte* (To the distant beloved), composed by Beethoven in 1816. The poetry is written by Alois Isidor Jeitteles. This cycle is considered one of the earliest examples of a song cycle. The cycle is through-composed, meaning that there are no breaks after each song, but they carry into one another so it almost feels like one long song. The story of the cycle follows the protagonist as he deals with being separated from his beloved, and all the joys and sorrows he finds around him and in nature. The cycle starts with *Auf dem Hügel sitz ich spähend* (I sit on the hill, gazing), where the protagonist gazes into the distance at the spot where he met his love for the first time. He yearns for her love and decides to sing to convey his feelings toward her. This song is strophic, meaning that the melody repeats but has a different text set to it each time. The melody is simple yet profound, and Beethoven plays with the piano accompaniment, making it different for each verse. In the last verse of the song, Beethoven decides to speed up the tempo and ends it dramatically, before the short bridge that leads into the next song. *Wo die Berge so blau* (Where the blue mountains), is the second song of the cycle. The protagonist feels the same way as the landscape around him and only the winds can help calm his suffering. This song is structured unusually, it feels more

like a chamber piece with instruments than an art song. In the middle of the song, the singer plays second fiddle to the piano, where the piano plays the melody and the singer sings on one note for a whole verse. After that, there is a build-up to the end of the song, which then connects to the next song. *Leichte Segler in den Höhen* (Light clouds sailing on high) is the third song of the cycle, the protagonist is asking all these elements of nature like the clouds, to help remind his beloved of him. The song is quick and fiery and it is also strophic, similar to the first song. The piano starts by playing a triplet figure which then changes into an eight-note figure before going back to the triplet figure. Beethoven wrote the vocal line alternating long and short notes, some verses might only have short notes, some might only have long and others have both. The song finishes with a sustained note that goes into the next song. The fourth song of the cycle, *Diese Wolken in den Höhen* (These clouds on high) feels almost like an interlude, with how short the song is and how it transitions from the third song to the fifth song. The protagonist is happy and believes that his beloved will see him in the clouds and the birds. The song is delicate with a bouncy melody and a modest piano accompaniment and it is a perfect breather before the fifth song. *Es kehret der Maien, es blühet die Au* (May returns, the meadow blooms), is the fifth song of the cycle, May has arrived and everything has become alive again except for the love between the protagonist and his beloved. The music is gleeful but there is still a sense of sentimentality present in the song. There is a long prelude in the piano that sets the song up perfectly. The song is strophic and it has three verses, the vocal melody is quite interesting as all the verses start with the highest note in the phrase, and a scale coming down. The song ends on a melancholic note, with the protagonist realizing that the spring has not reunited him with his lover. This ending transitions beautifully into the last song of the cycle, *Nimm sie hin denn diese Lieder* (Accept, then, these songs). The song begins with a luscious prelude in the piano, sounding like a beginning of a piano sonata written by Beethoven. The singer then joins in and repeats the solemn melody that the piano played in the prelude. The protagonist tells his beloved to sing the songs he has sung, and that the songs will remove the distance that has been keeping them apart. The song has many dramatic moments until we return to the same melody from the first song of the cycle, making the cycle feel like it has come full circle. Beethoven does this brilliantly, slowly introducing the melody from the first song back into this finale. The cycle ends with a grand climax and, capping off one of the most impressive song cycles ever written.

### **Sélections / Selections**

#### **Hirðinginn, Op. 4, No. 1**

**Emil Thoroddsen (1898-1944)**

**Karl O. Runólfsson (1900-1970)**

The Icelandic songs I picked for the program might not be written in the Romantic era per se but the characteristics of the music are very reminiscent of the peak of the Romantic era. The first song of the set is the song *Til skýsins* (To the Cloud). The song is composed by Emil Thoroddsen, with the poetry written by his grandfather, Jón Thoroddsen. The song tells a story of a dark cloud and how the narrator can connect his feelings with the cloud. Emil's composition is quite dramatic and he starts the song off with a long introduction in the piano. The singer joins in and sings a dark and brooding melody, before reaching the climax of the first section of the song. The middle section song is forlorn but still has a more optimistic tone than the rest of the song. We then go back to the brooding melody of the first section and the song ends with a powerful last couple of bars. The second song of the set is from a music/play based on the novel *Piltur og stúlka* (Boy and Girl) written by Jón Thoroddsen. His grandson, Emil composed the music for the play, and the song on the program is the first song of the play. The play is about a girl and a

boy who meet when they are young but only fall in love when they are much older. The song starts with an extended introduction in the piano part, reminiscent of some of Richard Strauss' most famous songs. The melody of the vocal line is sweet and it has a grand vocal climax in the two verses. The song ends similarly to how it started, with a long postlude in the piano part.

Karl O. Runólfsson was one of Iceland's most prolific composers, he composed songs, orchestra pieces, violin sonatas, and more. *Hirðinginn* (The Shepherd) is one of his lesser-known works, it is a song about being a shepherd and the freedom and the loneliness that comes with it. The poetry is written by Davíð Stefánsson. The song is Icelandic in its essence, with many of the intervals in the song being fourths and fifths which is a common theme in older Icelandic music. The song is very dramatic with multiple tempo and character changes. There is a certain bitterness present throughout the song that you can sense until the last note of the piece.

### **Sélections / Selections**

#### **Serenade, *The Student Prince***

**Amy Beach (1867-1944)**

**Sigmund Romberg (1887-1951)**

The last set of the recital, are songs written by American composers Amy Beach and Sigmund Romberg. Amy Beach's music is highly romantic with huge swells and climatic moments throughout every song. The first song of the set is Ecstasy by Amy Beach, with poetry written by her as well. The song is about unconditional love and how we can love someone right until the end. The song has a luscious melody and a highly emotional chorus. The second song of the set is The Summer Wind with text by Walter Learned. The song talks about the summer wind and how it is like a "fickle lover." The piano plays a swelling figure that represents the wind and the singer has a sentimental melody that has many leaps and sustained notes. The third song of the set is The Secret. It is a little different from the other songs of the set, it is set in the meter of 3/8 and it is a dance. The song follows the speaker as he asks his beloved for the secret that he keeps inside himself. The piano has a bouncy dance rhythm throughout most of the song while the singer glides over. Even though the song is a dance, Beach gives the singer a lot of space with tempo changes and long sustained notes. The last song of the Amy Beach set, is the song Sweetheart, Sigh No More. This song is the most dramatic song of the whole program, the song has a slow buildup that reaches an awe-inspiring climax at the end of the song. The song is a simple love song, where the speaker asks a bird to reassure his beloved of how much he cares for her.

The last song of the recital is the Serenade from *The Student Prince*. *The Student Prince* is an American operetta that was later made into a film starring Mario Lanza. Lanza was not able to finish shooting the movie so they had to replace him with another actor, but according to some contractual agreements they were still allowed to use his recordings of the songs in the movie. The actor that replaced him ended up lip-syncing to Lanza's recording. Serenade is one of the more popular songs of the movie, it is a love song where Prince Karl Franz serenades Kathy, a commoner that he has fallen in love with. The song is emotional and sentimental but there is a certain quality to it, you feel like you have heard this song before.